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ABSTRACT

Noting that poor social and emotional skills can interfere with academic growth of elementary school students, this action research project examined the impact of an intervention to improve students' emotional and social skills. Participating in the study were students from one fifth-grade public school class, one fifth-grade class in a private school, and one second-grade public school class. The problem of low social and emotional behavior skills in the areas of responsibility, motivation, self-confidence, and cooperation was documented by means of teacher, parent, and student surveys. The intervention program focused on cooperative learning activities, team building, and character education activities implemented around weekly themes: caring, listening, courage, courtesy, fairness, review, honesty and truthfulness, kindness and helpfulness, respect, responsibility, manners, work ethic, and review. The effects of the intervention were assessed by means of a teacher tally system and parent, teacher, and student surveys administered on a pre-post basis. Findings indicated that for public school fifth-graders, teachers noted a slight improvement in student behavior, with slight decreases in verbal and physical inappropriateness. Students reported a noticeable increase in cooperation but decreased responsibility and self-confidence. Parents reported a slight increase in positive school attitudes. For private school fifth-graders, teachers reported slight improvements in student behavior, with slight decreases in group and verbal inappropriateness but increases in physical inappropriateness. Students reported decreased responsibility, motivation, self-confidence, and cooperation. For second-graders, there was little change in student responsibility, although there were improvements in motivation and self-confidence. (Three appendices contain the teacher, parent, and student surveys. Contains 20 references.) (KB)

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IMPROVING SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL SKILLS THROUGH COOPERATIVE LEARNING

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Abstract

This report describes an intervention to increase students emotional and social skills. The targeted population consisted of one fifth grade public schools, one fifth grade private school, and one second grade public school. The problem of low social and emotional behavior skills were documented through teacher behavioral surveys, parental surveys, and student attitudinal surveys.

Analysis of the problem cause indicated that the students exhibited low social and emotional behavioral skills that interfered with academic growth. Review of literature indicated that due to the change in family structure and discipline, some children are not equipped with the emotional and social skills needed to achieve academically.

A review of solution strategies suggested by other researchers combined with an analysis with the problem setting, resulted in the development of creating a socially and emotionally safe environment. The program included cooperative learning activities, team building, and character education.

Post intervention data indicated an improvement in social and emotional skills through the use of cooperative learning.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER 1 - PROBLEM STATEMENT AND CONTEXT 1

General Statement of the Problem 1

Immediate Problem Context 1

The Surrounding Community 4

National Context of the Problem 6

CHAPTER 2 - PROBLEM DOCUMENTATION 9

Problem Evidence 9

Problem Causes 11

CHAPTER 3 - THE SOLUTION STRATEGY 15

Literature Review 15

Project Objectives and Processes 26

Project Action Plan 26

Methods of Assessment 35

CHAPTER 4 - PROJECT RESULTS 36

Historical Description of the Intervention 36

Presentation and Analysis of Results 39

Conclusion and Recommendations 43

REFERENCES 46

APPENDIX

A PARENT NOTIFICATION LETTER AND SURVEY 48

B STUDENT SURVEY 51

C TEACHER BEHAVIORAL SURVEY 53

CHAPTER 1

PROBLEM STATEMENT AND CONTEXT

General statement of the Problem

The students of the targeted second and fifth grade classes exhibit low social and emotional behavioral skills that interfere with academic growth. Evidence for the existence of the problem includes data collected from teacher behavioral surveys, checklists, parental surveys, and student attitudinal surveys.

Immediate Problem Context

Three sites were used in this research study which consisted of one fifth grade public school, one second grade public school, and one fifth grade private school.

Site A:

The targeted school is located in a suburb of a large metropolitan city. The building houses kindergarten through fifth grade and has a total population of 622. Of these students, 90.8% are Caucasian, 1.1% are African American, 3.4% are Hispanic, and 4.7% are Asian/Pacific Islander. The number of low income students is 1% and 3.2% of the student population have limited English proficiency. The attendance rate

of the student population is 96.5% with 0% chronic truancy. The student population has a mobility rate of 9.8%.

The staff consists of twenty-four classroom teachers, six special education teachers, one music, art, and physical education teacher, and fifteen support personnel. Of the staff, 99.1% are Caucasian and 0.9% are Asian/Pacific Islander. Fifty-two percent of the certified staff hold a master's degree or above. The average teaching experience is 14.8 years. The student/teacher ratio is 19.5:1.

In addition to the regular instructional program, the school offers reading support, special education, gifted program, English as a Second Language(ESL), and social work services. Students undergo a screening process to qualify for these programs.

The school is three years old and is located in a residential area. The targeted school is made up of 26 regular classrooms, a learning resource center, a gymnasium, a music room, an art room, a multipurpose/lunchroom, and a fully equipped computer lab. The average class size is 24.2. The air conditioned, carpeted classrooms are average in size, equipped with sinks, water fountains, and telephones. Each classroom is equipped with four computers that have access to the internet. There is a playground located one block from the school. In addition, there are two asphalt play areas around the school. There is a large grassy area behind the school which is used for physical education classes and recess. The school provides an on site before and after school program for the students.

Site B:

The targeted school is part of a region in a large metropolitan city. The school is prekindergarten through eighth grade. Of these students, 28.5% are Caucasian, 2.2% are African American, 65.7% are Hispanic, and 3.4% are Asian/Pacific Islander.

The area is low-income in which 81.4% of the families receive public aid. The attendance rate of the student population is 95% and 0.5% truancy rate. The population has a mobility rate of 28.6%.

The staff consists of 68 full time teachers and 35 full time aides, one music and art teacher, and two physical education teachers. The school was built in 1925. The average class size is between 30 and 40 students. Of the 68 teachers, 54.7% have bachelor's degree and 44.3% have masters's degrees. The average teaching experience is 14.8 years. Of the staff, 44% are Caucasian, 28% are Hispanic, 24% are African American, and 4% are Asian/Pacific Islander.

The school has recently undergone reconstruction of the main building. An addition has been added that houses 25 new classrooms, complete lunchroom with cooking kitchen, gymnasium, and a resource room. The building has two floors of classrooms. The newer portion contains prekindergarten through third grade classrooms, the older part contains fourth through eighth. There is a large auditorium that seats 368 and two gymnasiums. The school has a computer room complete with internet access.

Of the 1276 students, there are 142 who have been diagnosed with disabilities. One hundred twenty-eight receive special education services at the targeted school. There are four special education rooms that service the children needing special services. In addition, the school does provide after school programs for the children.

Site C:

The targeted school is located in suburbia, outside a large metropolitan city. The building is composed of grades Jr. K-8 and has a population of 412. The ethnicity of the population includes: 96.8% Caucasian, 1.25% Asian/Pacific Islander, 1.25%

Hispanic, 0.7% African American. The number of low income students is 0.05%. The average daily attendance of the students is 85%. Chronic truancy is nonexistent.

The staff consists of one principal, one full time assistant principal, eighteen classroom teachers, one learning disability specialist, one reading specialist, one art teacher, one music teacher, one physical education teacher, one computer teacher, and two full time librarians. The staff is 100% Caucasian. Forty-two percent of the certified staff hold a Master's degree or above. The student/teacher ratio is 22.8:1.

The school is a Catholic educational institution that is family centered which nurtures, supports, and reinforces a clearly defined Christian value system. The institution also offers reading support and special education services.

The Surrounding Community

Site A:

This school district consists of two elementary schools and one middle school. The current enrollment is about 1,804. The districts administration center is located adjacent to one of the elementary buildings. The offices of the Superintendent, Assistant Superintendent/Director of Curriculum and Instruction, Director of Special Services, Director of Fiscal Services and Facilities, and Technology Coordinator are located in the district administration center. Each building has one full-time principal. Both elementary buildings have one full time secretary, one part time clerical aid, one full time nurse, one part time psychologist, one part time psychologist intern, and a full time social worker. The middle school has has an additional secretary and also has an assistant principal.

The school district is located in a suburban community "Where Friendliness is a Way of Life." The population is approximately 53,168. The median home value is $155,100 and the median rent is approximately $564.00. The average income is

$46,508 a year. Many young couples move to the area because of the wholesome community and the many programs the town offers.

The school has a very active Parent Teacher Association(PTA). The PTA offers many activities to both students and parents. In addition, they provide a great deal of financial support and also have a strong volunteer program. The school/district also receives benefits from an Educational Foundation. The Foundation has provided a great deal of technology equipment. There is a voluntary Board of Trustees that oversees the foundation. The foundations work and efforts have allowed for each classroom in the district to be equipped with four student computers. They continue to work to provide funds and resources to enrich the classroom and school environment.

Site B:

The Chicago Public School System(CPS) is broken up into six regions. The targeted site is part of region two, and the regional office is on the northeast side of the city. The administrative offices of the CPS are located in downtown Chicago. Population of the region is approximately 421,815. The homes are valued between $50,000 and $150,000. The building has one principal who heads the staff, and one full-time instructional coordinator who assists them. There is one full-time counselor/case manager, one social worker, and one truant officer. There is also a librarian and a part time nurse to aid and assist staff and students.

The school has a Local School Council(LSC) which consists of parents of the children and two teachers from the school staff. The LSC oversee school policy, hire and fire the principal, and distribute monies to the school.

Site C:

The school is one of three private elementary schools in the area. The current enrollment at all three schools is 1,070. The Archdiocesan headquarters is located in the metropolitan city, outside the immediate community.

The private schools encompass a suburban community which highlights its "Proud Heritage, Bright Future." This upper-middle class professional community's population is 11,329 that stretches across an area of 2.5 square miles. The median home value is $359,035 and the median rent is approximately $630.00. The average income is $96,038 per year. The community race distribution includes: 92.9% Caucasian, 2.4% Hispanic, 1.9% Asian/Pacific Islander, 1.6% African American, and 1.2% American Indian.

The school has a very involved and devoted Home School Association, School Board, and Technology Committee. These parent organizations provide a tremendous amount of financial support for the school which have made computers accessible in all rooms throughout the school in addition to the newly revamped computer laboratory. Yearly fund raisers include the Fall Walk-A-Thon and the Spring Dinner Dance Auction which raises approximately $150,000 to benefit students' education.

National Context of the Problem

As we move into the twenty first century, educators are facing issues beyond what can be found in the textbook. With the increase of single parent homes, dual working parents, and no-parent homes, schools are beginning to see the affects. Many children come to school unable to appropriately handle social situations, have difficulty communicating with others, and have little to no respect for others. This often

leads to low self-esteem, and research has shown that these factors have an affect on student achievement. (Bellanca, 1992)

According to the article "Emotional Savvy" by Bennett, Dr. Howard Gardner, a Harvard University Professor of Education, states that the intelligence that is being measured on an Intelligence Quotient (IQ) test represents only part of the picture. "Many people with a high IQ end up working for people with a lower IQ if the former have poor intrapersonal intelligence and the latter have a high one and in the day to day world, no intelligence is more important than the intrapersonal." There has been a long suspected relationship between emotional skills and success in life. High test scores don't always produce career success or general satisfaction. Educators need to create an environment that children can practice and improve their intrapersonal skills. Being able to get along with people, handle frustrations, and control emotions are more important indicators than test scores in the long run. (Bennetts. 1996).

According to Promoting Social and Emotional Learning: Guidelines for Educators, social and emotional education integrates emotion, cognition, subject matter, and behavior by using active learning techniques. "This integration leads to learning that extents beyond the classroom, that is internalized by students and becomes part of them, rather than something they take or simply to pass a test." (Elias, et al., 1997, 125). Thus, children need to grow into adults who are smart in many ways. They need to become "knowledgeable, responsible, and caring." (Elias, et al., 1997, 125).

Dr. Daniel Goleman PhD. suggests to educators that if the emotional needs are met, the child will learn better. Creating these emotionally safe and secure environments will allow students to thrive and collaborate with one another. As a result, children will begin to acquire the social and emotional skills needed for living.

> The Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development states that : when schools attend to students' social and emotional skills, the academic achievement of children increases, the incidence of problem behaviors decreases and the quality of the relationships surrounding each child improves; and the students became the productive, responsible, contributing members of society. (Elias, et al., 1997, 1-2).

Therefore, by promoting a safe, social, and emotional environment in the classroom, students' academic achievement will be positively affected.

In order to create a positive attitude, Krupp suggests three things: focus on strengths, don't reinforce negative thinking in yourself or others, and continue to set high standards, but do not require perfection. These suggestions apply to both children and adults. In addition, children need to learn to take risks which will result in confidence. (Krupp, 1992).

The literature shows that there is a need to meet children's emotional and academic needs in our world today. These life skills are essential in securing the success of the children of our society. If children are properly equipped with these skills, they will be better prepared to handle their future and find success in what they do.

CHAPTER 2

Problem Documentation

Problem Evidence

In order to document the extent of student's low social and emotional skills, informal surveys were given to the students and to their parents. In addition, the teachers monitored student behavior using a tally system.

In the student survey, the targeted students were asked four questions pertaining to responsibility, three questions pertaining to motivation, three questions pertaining to self-confidence, and five questions pertaining to cooperation. Results of the student survey indicate that an overwhelming number of students perceived themselves to be highly responsible, motivated, confident, and cooperative. A summary of the results are shown below in tables one, two, and three.

Site A:

Table One

Student perception of their display of:	All of the time	Most of the time	Sometimes	Never
Responsibility	45%	40%	15%	0%
Motivation	57%	37%	6%	0%
Self-Confidence	55%	32%	13%	0%
Cooperation	28%	57%	15%	0%

Site B:

Table Two

Student perception of their display of:	All of the time	Most of the time	Sometimes	Never
Responsibility	73%	17%	10%	0%
Motivation	56%	32%	12%	0%
Self-Confidence	46%	33%	21%	0%
Cooperation	44%	26%	6%	24%

Site C:

Table Three

Student perception of their display of:	All of the time	Most of the time	Sometimes	Never
Responsibility	48%	30%	16%	6%
Motivation	56%	35%	3%	6%
Self-Confidence	55%	43%	2%	0%
Cooperation	51%	37%	12%	0%

The results of the parental surveys indicated that a majority of the students did enjoy coming to school. In addition, the survey results indicated that most children were able to share with others and did enjoy group activities. The survey results also showed that most children did not prefer to work on their own. Lastly, the survey results indicated a large percentage of students did not consistently express a positive attitude towards themselves.

The results of the teacher tallying system indicated that a majority of the students displayed a great deal of verbal inappropriateness throughout the week. There were a few incidence of physical inappropriateness. This was observed more often in males. Group inappropriateness was not observed, and group complaints only occurred a small number of times. At Site A, there were 97 incidence of verbal inappropriateness, there were 21 incidence of physical inappropriateness, 23 incidence of group inappropriateness, and 19 incidence of group complaints over a five day period. At Site B there were 58 incidence of verbal inappropriateness, there were 34 incidence of physical inappropriateness, 10 incidence of group inappropriateness, and 13 incidence of group complaints over a five day period. At Site C there were 26 incidence of verbal inappropriateness, there were 19 incidence of physical inappropriateness, 10 incidence of group inappropriateness, and 7 incidence of group complaints over a five day period.

Probable Causes (Site-based)

Probable causes varied from site to site.

Site A:

Students of the targeted school appear to be lacking discipline at home. As previous research has shown, there are many changes in the family structure which may contribute to the lack of discipline. Often times, students do not receive consequences for behaviors, both in and out of school. In addition, the students do not show respect towards authority figures and peers As a result, children have a great deal of difficulty following classroom rules, building positive relationships, and maintaining emotional stability. Furthermore, children's academic success suffers due

to the lack of emotional and social skills. The above reasons have been observed by teacher/researcher A.

Site B:

In the targeted school, the parents appear to be lacking the appropriate "parenting skills" in some areas. This is evident from the lack of follow-up when the teacher has initiated a phone call conference with a parent. The results seem to be that these children come to school incapable of accepting consequences for their behavior. In addition there is not a great deal of guidance or support from parents in the areas of emotional and social development. This is evident from the researchers' initiative to call parents from a child's infraction and receive no follow through or support from parents at home.

Site C:

The targeted students at this school site appear to be lacking discipline at home. Care givers seem to neglect accountability and consequences of their children's behavior. There is evidence of this, in that follow through does not take place after parents are called in due to a child's infraction. These students also receive excessive material gratification from home which affect peer relationships inside and outside of school. This is evident through outer apparel such as jackets and shoes that are worn by the students. As a result, this appears to interfere with academic performance.

Probable Causes (Literature-based)

A review of the literature concurs with several of the site-based probable causes for lack of social skills in the classroom. A literature search supported several of the site-based causes. Petersen(1993) states that "literature shows that situations at

home can contribute to the emotional and academic well being of a child." He links various negative family interactions directly to negative behavior performance in school. In addition, he found that these students who are involved in families with negative interaction are often isolated or shunned by their peers. He thinks many of these children need social training in order to achieve emotional or academic success.

Due to the changing family structure, experts are now seeing the effects on children that come from these negative environments. Comer (as sited in Bellanca, 1994) states that "Sociologists have documented the increasing number of children who come from single-parent, dual working-parent, and no-parent homes...These same sociologists have shown us the effects that different family structures may have on student achievement and behavior in school." Bellanca also comments that there is a breakdown of the value system in school. Children are learning "little about social responsibility, mutual caring, respect, or cooperation."(Bellanca, 1994)

A study conducted by Cooksey, Menaghan, and Jekielek agree with Bellanca's view of the changing family. The study found that family setting has a direct impact on a child's behavioral problems. The study concluded by saying that the number of children experiencing these types of situations is increasing.

It is evident that schools need to be aware of these changes and address them within the curriculum. "Clearly many students today are in desperate need of this kind of help" (Bennetts, 1996). Dr.Goleman believes that children need to be able to handle frustration, control emotions, and get along with other people.

In has been found that social and emotional stability has been linked to academic success. According to Bennetts, "Social Scientists have long suspected a relationship between emotional skills and success in life."

Pool also agrees with Goleman and Bennetts opinion on success being linked to emotional well-being. In addition, Pool places great importance on children

acquiring emotional skills for life. Pool feels that emotional stability enables individuals to be successful in aspects of their life.

Overall, the literature suggests that because over the past decades family structures have been changing , and children have been affected emotionally at home. There is often less structure, continuity, and discipline. As a result, much of this is being transferred to the school setting. Fortunately, there is something we can do as educators, to help solve this problem.

CHAPTER 3

THE SOLUTION STRATEGY

Literature Review

Emotional and social skills are defined as the ability to understand, manage, and express the social and emotional aspects of one's life. This enables the successful management of life tasks such as learning, forming relationships, solving everyday problems, and adapting to the complex demands of growth and development. (Elias and Zins, et al.,1997) Experts are finding a lack of emotional and social skills at home and in school. In addition, there is not a great deal of awareness of the importance of emotional intelligence contributing to students' achievement, on the part of parents, care givers, and teachers.

Daniel Goleman, one of the leading experts on emotional intelligence, explains throughout his book, *Emotional Intelligence*, how the emotions of the brain function, and what these emotions are for. He introduces and evaluates on the five dimensions of emotional intelligence as: self-awareness, handling emotions, motivation, empathy and social skills. Goleman's goal is to explain "how we can bring intelligence to our emotions."(1995, p.xiv)

There are overwhelming opinions by experts that social stability and emotional intelligence contributes to person's success with family relationships, jobs, and community life. According to an article by Pool, as one looks toward the emotional well being of children today, it is quite evident that children are lacking emotional skills. In her article, she describes Goleman's five dimensions of emotional intelligence. Pool begins with self awareness, which she claims is the basis for self confidence. Studies show that low self-awareness leads to confused feelings and other various problems. Children need to know what they can handle and what limitations they have. They also need to be able to put words with their feelings.

Handling emotions gradually is the second dimension, which is described as "knowing how to handle upsetting feelings, or impulses."(Pool, 1997, p.13) This is considered to be at the root of emotional intelligence. Studies on this dimension have shown that less impulsive individuals tend to be more flexible, adaptable, and conscientious.

Motivation, the third dimension, specifies goal setting and knowing how to reach those goals. Pool describes this as being essential for children to learn in order to achieve and find fulfillment. Goleman found that children who set goals for themselves on tests, such as the S.A.T, achieved higher scores than those who did not.

The fourth dimension, empathy, is described as being able to recognize others feelings. This involves being able to read others body language and emotions. This leads to better communication and cooperation.

The final dimension is social skills. The simple task of greeting a person walking by can be considered one of these social skills. This has been shown to have a positive impact on the person receiving the greeting as well as the person giving it. The article suggests that these skills are contagious and can be modeled.

Pool concludes her article by writing "Emotional intelligence matters for school achievement, job success, marital happiness, and physical health." She also believes that emotional intelligence can be raised in students and refers to Goleman's suggestion of developing programs for emotional intelligence and integrating them into the curriculum and school environment.(Pool 1997)

Another expert concurs with Pool and Goleman. Bennetts(1996) suggests that emotional quotient and intelligence quotient determines the success of a child. As stated in Chapter two, a relationship between emotional skills and success in life is highly correlated. Bennetts sees emotional and intelligence quotient as not opposite, but existing together. He believes: "Your child may be traditionally brainy and also have exceptional emotional skills." (Bennetts, 1996, p.58) Bennetts also suggests that people need to rethink their definition of intelligence. He describes emotional quotient similarly to what Goleman describes, which was the ability to identify feelings and using them to make good choices. In addition, the responsibility is not only the educators, but parents also. Bennetts found that young children with high emotional quotient are more likely to become good students. He suggested several ways parents can increase emotional intelligence such as: tuning into emotions, acknowledging the emotions, helping children identify them, and helping children work through them appropriately.

Bennetts believes that children with high emotional skills have great advantages in school. He states that data has shown that these emotional skills can be taught in school. He acknowledges the growing concern of parents and teachers, but concludes in saying that "the most important place to teach emotional intelligence is in your home."(Bennetts, 1996, p. 59)

Cummings and Haggerty, in the article *Raising Healthy Children*, suggest that "Social skills instructions can have a long term positive effect on student's interaction

with others, on their attitudes towards school, and on their academic achievement." (1997, p.28) They site examples of strategies to increase emotional learning. Some of these include: identifying qualities of goodness from various novels, conducting class meetings which encourage complimenting, and listening to stories of how children were able to overcome struggles in their lives. Cummings and Haggerty add that these skills are necessary to succeed in life, and site a report which indicates that "teachers who use social skills curriculums are more satisfied with their classes and with teaching in general than the teachers who don't." (1997, p.28)

Cummings and Haggerty conducted a study of their own in 1993. The project involved first and second grade students from several schools. This project was conducted by the Social Development Research Group of the University of Washington and Edmond School District 15, for which they received funding from the National Institute on Drug Abuse. The goal of the project was to provide a bridge between family and school and increase emotional intelligence.

Throughout the project, they developed teaching units to help teachers implement the plan. In addition, the plan suggested staff development and encouraged teachers to work together in order to have a successful program. Cummings and Haggerty realize that this is not the ultimate solution, but conclude that significant long term improvements were seen.

In an article by John O'Neil, James Comer was interviewed. O'Neil uncovered some answers as to the importance of emotional and social development in schools. Comer placed a great deal of importance on the relationships children have with adults. The article points out that some feel that emotional instruction detracts from academic work; however, Comer's response explained that one must understand the impact that emotional intelligence will have on academic success. Comer also stresses "That continuity and stability are absolutely vital for kids." He states that

children also need " the chance to attach with and bond to adults who are meaningful and important to them." (O'Neil, 1997, p.10)

There is an overwhelming consensus among researchers that emotional intelligence is key to academic success. Krupp describes the importance of self esteem and teaching children to take risks. As the other experts have indicated, Krupp also suggests that the emotional well being comes from parents, teachers, and the individuals themselves. Krupp also describes the importance of the sense of self and how children can benefit from this type of environment.

Teaching Social Skills in the Classroom

So then how do we teach and develop social and emotional skills in our classrooms? We begin by structuring lessons cooperatively where students can learn to communicate with each other.

> "Teaching cooperative skills becomes an important prerequisite for academic learning since achievement will improve as students become more effective in learning from each other. All students need to become skillful in communicating, building and maintaining trust providing leadership, engaging in fruitful controversy and managing conflicts."(Johnson, 1990,1991:Johnson & F. Johnson,1990 p.512)

When using the five elements in their conceptual approach to cooperative learning, the students become accountable. The process to teach these skills is as follows. First the skills are explained. Second, the skills are modeled by demonstrating them. Third, the class generates a series of phrases that could be used to engage in the skills such as "we could do it this way or another way we could do it is..." . Fourth, students role play a group session class discussing each of the skills again. And fifth, the students are told to complete an assignment using the skills they

have learned and targeted and use the skills as much as possible.Through doing this, the children learn to be respectful of each other by helping and sharing with each other by using these skills. Students learn the cooperative skills needed to complete the group work. They learn interdependence in which they work together toward a common goal or learning task. But most important, they learn to process as a group and reflect on how they all worked together, and how they can improves a team or unit.

James Comer (School Development program in New Haven, Connecticut) felt that many programs focus exclusively on academic achievement. He attempts to create a school climate that permits parents and staff to support the overall development of all children in a way that fosters academic achievement and social behavior at an acceptable level both possible and expected. Social Emotional Learning must work in the context of shared values and be visibly focused on the goals of promoting children's social and emotional skills insuring healthy development, and preparing students for life as family and community members, active citizens and productive members of the workplace. (*Elis,et.al.*1997))

Another important factor about teaching social skills in the school setting, is that it addresses diversity,including cultural and learning differences. Banks believes that a diverse Social Emotional Lesson program is one that is sensitive and relevant with regard to ethnicity, gender, and socio-economics of students served. This also includes the faculty facilitating the program. Its procedures include an awareness and appreciation of differences.(Banks 1992;Gager, Kress, and Elias,1996)

Two of the most important factors in starting the program and keeping it going is stated best by Haffey, "A Social Emotional Learning (SEL) program like Primary Mental Health program (PMHP) is a constant growth cycle for everyone involved. You constantly have to nurture and validate, If you don't do that, the effectiveness will slip away."(Haffey, Board of Cooperative Services PMHP p,95)

The key to being an active participant in a classroom is by being responsible. Sheldon Berman, president of Educators for Social Responsibility notes, "Social responsibility is a personal investment in the well-being of others and of the planet,(1990,p.75) He identified several aspects of social responsibility including developing "a consciousness of group" which he explains as: becoming aware of group needs, then using this consciousness to help the group more effectively, work and live together, being able to understand another point of view, having organized skills and group problem-solving skills. (as cited in Fogarty 1990 p.271)

In order to accomplish more of a group consciousness, the teacher can start with some basic standards in the classroom and build from there. For example being on time, being responsible for your learning, and being responsible for your materials and assignments. One person speaks at a time and your own personal area should be neat and clean. Base groups are created, then other groups are made as needed for activities. (If Minds Matter,Vol.II)

So what should our classrooms look like to effectively teach social, emotional learning? Boyer (as cited in Fogarty,1990 p.7) believes that "Students should not be passively limited to reading texts and writing papers. Rather, the classroom should be an active place where students participate and role play different situations. They should be involved in the decisions made in the classroom, as practice for what life will later require of them." In essence, students need to understand the relationship between what they learn and transfer it to how they live. Cooperative learning provides practice situations for life's social skills.

Ballanca states that an early childhood program ought to be filled with social skill instruction and the opportunity for the children to practice these skills as they play together. Basic skills need to be taught and reinforced, including trust, cooperation,

respect for oneself and others. The ideal program would provide modeling, guided practice and feedback in the cooperative social skills, making learning a fun and engaging process. The primary grades are the best opportunity for young students to develop the foundation of social skills which will only ensure academic success and self esteem as they move on. But it is so important to continue on into the middle grades where the pressure gets stronger. (If Minds Matter p. 201)

Self-esteem is generated when students perform valued behaviors and are recognized for doing so. For this to happen, decisions have to be made about what aspects of character and values will be made. Taffel, from Social and Emotional Learning, states that "values are best learned in the crucible of intervention with positive adults and peers." But Lickons believes that it is in students best interest for schools to address core values such as honesty, fairness and responsibility that are likely to be endorsed and encouraged by most settings.

In order to increase academic success, students' social and emotional skills need to be well-developed. "Students who are self-motivated...who self-assess and self-discipline are going to be successful in learning concepts, creating ideas, and becoming successful citizens." (Ellsworth, 1997, p.18). By enhancing such skills, student success will be exhibited both in and out of school settings.

In a safe, caring, and cooperative community students feel that they can express themselves freely and feel comfortable making mistakes because they know they will be accepted no matter what. "Teachers create such a learning community by providing safe, firm boundaries and modeling respectful, supportive interaction with others."(Elias and Zins, et al.,1997,p.45). Instructors of this nature insist that their students also be respectful and supportive of others.

Hawkins and Catalano (as cited by Elias and Zins, et al.,1997) believe that educators who set firm boundaries, foster warm personal relationships in the

classroom, and allow students to have input on their classroom environment strengthen students' interest in learning, their ability to refrain from self-destructive behaviors, and their positive behaviors. Students who have input in rule-making or group decisions are most likely to abide by them. This fosters a caring environment.

Research has indicated that students who have emotional attachments to teachers, peers, and school succeed academically. This goal is accomplished by "teachers communicating caring in their teaching and inspiring students to identify with them and feel hopeful about their ability to learn." (Elias and Zins, et al.,1997,p.45). When students feel this confidence in their learning it positively affects their peer relationships especially during group activities. Parker, Asher, and Rutter(as cited by Elias and Zins, et al.,1997) believe that students form and maintain mutually supportive relationships, which serves as a buffer against developing social, emotional, physical, and academic problems." Therefore, students who are happy socially and emotionally, academic success will prevail for them.

Cooperative Learning and Social Skills

Social and emotional balance is exhibited in the BUILD model of cooperative learning presented by Marcus and McDonald (cited by Bellanca and Fogarty, 1991). Five components comprise this cooperative model:

Build in higher-order thinking skills for transfer
Unite teams in face-to-face interactions
Insure individual learning
Look over and discuss the interaction
Develop social skills of cooperation for life

Students actively involved in the BUILD model become "intensely involved with the information under study." (Bellanca and Forgarty, 1991, p.167). Educators using BUILD thinking skills and thinking processes provide their students with high-challenge activities. As social and emotional skills are balanced, higher-order thinking is entwined, resulting in successful academic achievement. Dr.Sue Marcus, the author of the BUILD acronym, states:

> "When I created the BUILD model of cooperative learning I really had the social skills in mind, because it is the social skills that bind the learners together in the all-for-one-one-for-all way doing things. In my experience with training teachers in this model, it is the teachers who fail to teach the social skills that have a hard time with cooperative learning.The social skills facilitate every interaction taking place in the group. Higher order thinking skills increase when communication is forthcoming in the group. (S. Marcus, personal communication July 7,1999).

Cooperative learning is a "highly structured teaching method that requires careful planning and intense supervision by the teacher..." (Schumaker, 1992, p.233). The teacher acts as the guide-on-the-side, or facilitator, as students interact during learning activities. As engaged peers interact, information processing occurs. Art Costa categorizes this learning process into four phases: input, processing, output, and metacognition.

Schmaker discusses Costa's four phases as follows: the input phase takes in information in order to form a " knowledge base, a reference section of new information in the brain, for later use during more involved processes of learning." (Schumaker, 1992, p.234). This phase, also known as direct instruction, is a passive learning phase for the student. During this phase, the student usually is bored.

Processing information is the next phase. During this phase, students make information meaningful and store it in their long-term memory after background

knowledge is learned. The instructor designs activities to encourage synthesis and drawing relationships. Students are stimulated and engrossed in this stage of the lesson.

The third phase, known as the output phase, allows students to apply the new knowledge and demonstrate that they truly understand the concept at hand. Students work on cognitive behaviors such as predicting and evaluating during this phase. At this stage, students make decisions during their learning. This aids the students in decision-making regarding social situations as well.

During metacognition, the final phase, students think about their thinking. Students attempt to reflect on how they thought about their problems and decide if their reasoning is sound. Students take turns verbalizing their peers' reasoning. Students are usually not asked to work in this manner; therefore, it takes time to bring them to a point where they can think about their thinking out loud. This metacognitive strategy is able to be transferred into the students' personal situations. When students use metacognition in their own lives, they become self-aware and attentive listeners.

Cooperative learning not only teaches interactive social skills, but also provides for peer bonding in the classroom. Fogarty and Bellanca believe that as students increase their capabilities to relate constructively with peers, academic achievement, school-liking, and self-esteem will improve. Students learning how to relate with their peers will form friendships easier, "bond to stable forces in their lives, and develop the skills of collaboration."(Costa et al. 1992, p.14) Webb, (as cited by Winograd and Gaskins), believes that cooperative learning is also important because it enables students to both give and receive help from their peers, behaviors which seem to lead to higher achievement, and lowered anxieties.

In order for cooperative learning to be successful, students must be taught interpersonal and small group skills as well as reasons to use them.The need for

social skills is communicated, defined, and modeled prior to students' social skill repetition. During repetition, students practice the skills " over and over again... until the skills are fully integrated into their behavioral repertoires." (Johnson & Johnson, 1990, p.22) As a result, Johnson and Johnson conclude that there will be an increase in student achievement, students' future employability, career success, quality of relationships, and psychological health.

In summation, it has been determined that cooperative learning appears to be a viable solution to the lack of social skills exhibited by some children today. Research has indicated that students who have emotional attachments to teachers, to peers, and to school, succeed academically. By having social stability, this can contribute to a person's success with family relationships, jobs, and community life, as well. Cooperative learning can enhance a variety of other aspects of learning such as : higher order thinking, management training, and classroom climate. Cooperative learning has proven to be successful in most aspects of school improvement. Thus, the researchers have chosen cooperative learning for the intervention techniques.

Project Objective and Processes

> As a result of the social and emotional skills intervention, during the period of September 1999 to December 1999, the targeted group of second and fifth graders will increase the social and emotional skills, as measured by student surveys, parent surveys, and teacher tally system.

In order to accomplish the terminal objective, the following processes are necessary:

1. Surveying and teacher observation.
2. Development of themes to be carried out weekly.
3. Partner and cooperative group work to foster themes.

The following Action Plan is developed around weekly themes which are introduced at the beginning of each week. The activities for each week are based around these themes and are italicized throughout the plan.

Action Plan

Week One: Caring

*Teacher gram to two students. (Based on observation, the teacher will acknowledge two students each week who have displayed positive attitudes.)

Day. one:
-Distribute and complete student survey.
-Distribute parent survey.
-Begin Teacher checklist.
-A.M.: Introduce base groups
-P.M.: Partners brainstorm list of rules for groups.
Whole group develop master list.

Day two:
-Introduce "Caring" theme and complete attribute web.
-A.M.: Base group meeting to create name and poster.
-P.M.: Partners will illustrate "Caring". Share and discuss.

Day three:
-Journaling: "A time when you were cared for and when you cared for someone.
-A.M.: Partners share journal entries.
-P.M.: Base group meeting to complete a "Looks Like and Sounds Like" on "Caring"

Day four:
-Read aloud: **Giving Tree**
-A.M.: Base groups meet to come up with meanings from read aloud.
-P.M.:Partner Activity: Open ended math question.

Day five:
-A.M.: Partner writing activity using "Caring" words from day two.
-P.M.: Base groups meeting to create team song.

Week Two: Listening

•Teacher gram to two students

Day one:
-Introduce "Listening" - Complete attribute web.
-Complete "Back to Back" activity - Students will sit back to back and receive oral directions from each other in order to complete a picture.

Day two:
-Play a class game of telephone - discuss results.
-Base group meet and formulate a list of "What can you do to improve your listening skills?"

Day three:
-Teacher will read aloud a selection from the reading series and students will write or illustrate important information they hear.

Day four:
-Individuals will complete "Business Card" activity.

Favorite subject	Favorite activity
Name	
Accomplishment	Food

-Share with Base groups.

Day five:
-Listen to the song from **Lion King**.
-Partners meet and come up with 3 messages from the song.

Week Three: Courage

•Teacher gram to two students.

Day one:
-Introduce "Courage" and complete a "Looks Like&Sounds Like."

Day two:
-Read the poem "The Road Not Taken."
-Lead whole class discussion on how the poem shows courage.

Day three:
-Partners meet and share orally: One time they showed courage and were not able to show courage.

Day four:
-Show clip from **The Wizard of Oz**.
-Base groups discuss and record how the lion dealt with courage.

Day five:
-Class meeting on how individuals can be courageous and help others. (with peers, parents, siblings, etc.)

Week Four: Courtesy

*Teacher gram to two students.

Day one:
-Introduce "Courtesy" and complete a K.W.L. - What do students **know**, **want** to know, and what did students **learn**.
-Partners will brainstorm a list of how to be courteous to others.
-Create class poster for display.

Day two:
-Groups will pick a culture and research how courtesy and politeness is shown in the culture.

Day three:
-Base groups demonstrate a courteous act through role playing.

Day four:
-Whole class discussion on how courtesy is seen in the media.
How is it shown? How is it not shown?

Day five:
-Individuals will illustrate(2nd grade) or write an essay(5th grade) on their findings from day four.

Week Five: Fairness

*Teacher gram to two students.

Day one:
-Play "Unfair Game" (teacher led breaking all rules)
-Discuss results of game.
-Introduce "Fairness" and complete attribute web.

Day two:
-Partners will meet and come up with four examples of:
*When they were treated fairly.
*When they were treated unfairly.
*When they treated someone fairly.
*When they treated someone unfairly.

Day three:
-Base group will develop their own fairness creed.

Day four:
-Base groups will share their creeds with whole class.

Day five:
-Have a class meeting to discuss friendship and the importance of fairness in it.

Week Six: Review

*Teacher gram to two students.

Day one:
-Review all five skills and discuss importance of all of them.

Day two:
-Partners will meet and share how they have used each skill.
-Class will meet and discuss results.

Day three:
-Students will meet in base groups and illustrate five skills on big paper.

Day four:
-Class will be divided into five groups and will role play one of the skills

Day five:
-Marshmallow Spaghetti Tower contest with base groups.
-Assign: timekeeper, material manager, and reporter.
- *10 min.
- *10 marshmallows
- *10 mini marsh.
- *10 pieces of spaghetti

Week Seven: Honesty and Truthfulness

*Teacher gram to two students.

Day one:
-Complete self-evaluation on honesty and truthfulness.
-Answer questions on p. 57 (see Chicago Public School Character Education Guide)

Day two:
-Complete attribute web for honesty and truthfulness.

Day three:
-Base groups will brainstorm examples of how media can be honest and dishonest.

Day four:
-Share children's story on honesty and truthfulness.
"Do You Have Your Wallet?" - <u>Chicken Soup for the Kid's Soul</u>
-Partners will process lesson.

Day five:
-Creative Writing Topic: Honesty and Truthfulness. Students will create a poem containing the themes of Honesty and Truthfulness.

Week Eight: Kindness and Helpfulness

*Teacher gram to two students.

Day one:
-Introduce topic using a K.W.L. - What do students **know**, **want** to know, and what did students **learn**.

Day two:
-Individuals will complete "T-shirt" activity.

T.V.show Book

Name

Hobby Vacation place

Day three:
-Students will circulate and show kindness by writing on others' shirts.

Day four:
-Base groups will meet and share a kind experience. Group members will have to share another members experience with whole group.

Day five:
-Individuals will develop a week long action plan on how they will show Kindness and Helpfulness towards family, classmates, and friends.

Week Nine: Respect

*Teacher gram to two students.

Day one:
-Introduce topic by playing the song *Respect*.

Day two:
-Partners will meet and list attributes of a person who they feel is highly respected.

Day three:
-Complete poem activity. (see p. 74 Chicago Public School Character Education Guide)

Day four:
-Students will journal: "What respect means to me."

Day five:
-Base group will complete an acrostic poem using the word respect.

Week Ten: Responsibility

*Teacher gram to two students.

Day one:
-Introduce skill by using a "Looks like, Sounds like."

Day two:
-Base groups will meet and respond to one of the situations listed on p. 83. (see Chicago Public School Character Education Guide)

Day three:
-Individuals will complete "Responsibility Survey." (see p.78 Chicago Public School Character Education Guide)

Day four:
-Individuals will list all their personal responsibilities from the time they wake up in the morning until they go to bed a night.

Day five:
-Children will be given an egg or tomato and will be responsible for returning it to school safely on Monday.

Week Eleven: Manners

*Teacher gram to two students.

Day one:
-Complete a "Looks like, Sounds like."

Day two:
-Whole class will discuss the importance of manners and make a list of all the different types of manners.

Day three:
-Partners will role play an example of good manners.
(ie. picking up a pencil, holding the door, etc.)

Day four:
- A student will read a book on manners aloud.

Day five:
-Class game of "Thank You" ball.
(created by researchers)

Week Twelve: Work Ethic

*Teacher gram to two students.

Day one:
-Introduce topic and complete attribute web.

Day two:
-Lead class discussion using quote:
"A journey of a thousand miles begins with one step."
"Never leave that til tomorrow which you can do today."

Day three:
-Base groups will complete an open-ended question.
-After completing the task, individuals will gauge their own work ethic.

Day four:
-"Work Ethic" activity. (see p. 88 Chicago Public School Character Education Guide)

Week Thirteen: Review

*Teacher gram to two students.

Day one and two:
-Review each of the skills and the lessons learned.

Day three:
-Base groups will meet and create a recipe card.
"How to Make an Awesome Individual."

Day four:
-Partners will create a collage of one of the skills.

Day five:
-Class will combine collages from day four to make a class collage.

Methods of Assessment

In order to assess the effects of the intervention, surveys and a teacher tally system was developed. These surveys will be administered at the beginning and conclusion of the Action Plan.

CHAPTER 4

PROJECT RESULTS

Historical Description of the Intervention

The objective of this project was to improve social and emotional skills in the classroom. The implementation of cooperative learning activities, team building, and character education were used to attain the desired changes. In order to create a socially and emotional safe environment, a program was created which included cooperative learning activities, team building, and character education.

Site A:

Throughout the implementation period, various cooperative learning and team building activities were used. These activities were focused around character education themes. In order to promote a cooperative atmosphere, each member of the classroom belonged to a base group. Base groups are comprised of three or four students that remain together for the fifteen week period. Most of the group activities utilized these base groups.

At the beginning of each week, a theme was introduced. The whole class

would discuss the theme using various methods as shown in the action plan. Throughout the week, activities were scheduled to reinforce the theme.

During the first six weeks, the following themes were used: Caring, Listening, Courage, Courtesy, Fairness, and Honesty/Truthfulness. Throughout the weeks, the theme was explained and discussed in great detail. The students then participated in several activities which allowed them the opportunity to practice the skill and see its relevance in a real life setting. The activities included the telephone game, song analyzing, poetry reflection, and class meetings. Week six was used to review the themes which were unveiled up to that point. The activities for that week allowed for students to use all of what they had learned and experienced in various cooperative group activities. Some of the activities included partner discussion, role-playing, and a challenging base group task of building a tower with marshmallows and spaghetti.

The following themes were introduced during the second phase of the implementation period: Honesty & Truthfulness, Kindness & Helpfulness, Respect, Responsibility, Manners, and Work Ethic. Some of the activities which were used included self-evaluations, creative writing -poetry and short stories, song analysis, and poetry reflection. The final weeks were used to review all of the themes. The children created a class quilt in which all themes were represented. A detailed description of the daily activities can be found in the Action Plan in Chapter two. In addition to the themes, the teacher sent two positive notes to various students each week which recognized positive attitudes and actions.

Approximately four weeks into the intervention, the teacher researcher found it quite difficult to conduct all the activities each week which were stated in the action plan. In some cases, the teacher researcher reduced the amount of time for a given activity and, on occasion, eliminated a few activities. In addition, the researcher,

based on observations, opted to turn some small group activities into whole group activities. It was shown that the students benefited much more from whole group activities.

Site B:

The implementation of this project involved weekly themes in which activities were based around character education. Cooperative grouping, as well as directed teaching were used throughout implementation. Surveys were used for the research . A survey was taken home by the students for the parents to complete and return. This survey included questions collecting data on their child's desire to express social skills. (Appendix A) The purpose of this was to evaluate how they felt about themselves and others. An additional survey was given to the children at school, to see how they felt about their own responsibility, motivation, self confidence and cooperation in the classroom.

Original plans called for themes to be introduced and practiced weekly to the students in the classroom. Base groups were established at the beginning of the research and maintained throughout the intervention. The themes chosen for the research included: caring, listening, courage, courtesy, fairness, honestly, truthfulness, kindness, helpfulness, respect, responsibility manners and work ethic. Lesson plans were developed for each of the themes and followed. (Appendix B) Reinforcement of the theme introduced was done in cooperative groups and presented to the class. Each theme was done at the researchers-teacher's discretion, weekly and followed through with activities .

Site C:

Cooperative learning was used to teach social skills with a particular trait focused upon each week that was also employed as an instructional technique in order to deliver subject matter content. The social skills were taught directly while the students were in base groups. The groups were established during the second week of the school year and were maintained throughout the interventions. Original plans called for three, one half -hour group meetings per week, during which specific character traits were to be presented by the teacher and practiced by the student. Positive aspects of this intervention include: peer communication, consensus, and a sense of belonging. Negative aspects of this intervention include: the acoustical level tended to exceed average expectations. Also, it was advantageous to introduce a new character trait in pairs before proceeding into base groups.

Presentation of Analysis and Results

In order to assess the effects of cooperative learning activities, team building, and character education, various behavioral and attitudinal surveys were used. Parents, students, and the teacher completed pre and post surveys in order to document the low social and emotional behavior. The data is shown in the tables and narratives below:

Site A:

Table Four

Pre-Survey

Student perception of their display of:	All of the time	Most of the time	Sometimes	Never
Responsibility	45%	40%	15%	0%
Motivation	57%	37%	6%	0%
Self-Confidence	55%	32%	13%	0%
Cooperation	28%	57%	15%	0%

Table Five

Post-Survey

Student perception of their display of:	All of the time	Most of the time	Sometimes	Never
Responsibility	32%	48%	19%	1%
Motivation	57%	39%	4%	0%
Self-Confidence	50%	40%	9%	1%
Cooperation	41%	45%	12%	2%

The intervention appears to have had a positive effect on some of the targeted behaviors. In the area of cooperation, there was a noticeable increase. In the areas of responsibility and self-confidence, a decrease was shown. The researcher felt this might have something to do with the age and maturity level of the students. This

researcher also felt that the children answered the post survey more honestly and candidly than the pre-survey.

The results of the parent post survey revealed there was a slight increase in the childrens' attitude about coming to school. The results pertaining to the question about sharing and group activities remained the same as the pre survey which indicated that most children did enjoy sharing with others. Lastly, the post survey results indicated that a large percentage of students were still not able to consistently express a positive attitude towards themselves, as was similarly shown in the pre survey.

The teacher researcher found, after completing the tally system, that there was a slight improvement in student behavior. There was a slight decrease of verbal inappropriateness. In addition, the number of physical inappropriate incidence also decreased. There was only one member of the classroom who displayed group inappropriateness and group complaints were not evident. At Site A, there were eighty incidence of verbal inappropriateness, there were fifteen incidence of physical inappropriateness, five incidence of group inappropriateness, and two incidence of group complaints over the five day period.

Site B:

Table Six

Pre-Survey

Student perception of their display of:	All of the time	Most of the time	Sometimes	Never
Responsibility	73%	17%	10%	0%
Motivation	56%	32%	12%	0%
Self-Confidence	46%	33%	21%	0%
Cooperation	44%	26%	6%	24%

Table Seven

Post-Survey

Student perception of their display of:	All of the time	Most of the time	Sometimes	Never
Responsibility	43%	31%	19%	7%
Motivation	78%	10%	9%	3%
Self-Confidence	64%	17%	15%	4%
Cooperation	68%	10%	13%	6%

The intervention appears to have had a positive effect in some areas and no change in other areas. In the area of responsibility, the students were nearly the same before as after the intervention, struggling with challenges and demands of work needed to be done in the classroom. The students increased in the area of motivation after the intervention, showing the researcher they had more desire to do well in the classroom. In self confidence, the students increased in their knowledge that they could and would do better in the classroom. The researcher observed that the students felt better about themselves overall and more confident in the classroom. In cooperation, the students showed substantial increase.

Site C:

Table Eight

Pre-Survey

Student perception of their display of:	All of the time	Most of the time	Sometimes	Never
Responsibility	48%	30%	16%	6%
Motivation	56%	35%	3%	6%
Self-Confidence	55%	43%	2%	0%
Cooperation	51%	37%	12%	0%

Table Nine

Post-Survey

Student perception of their display of:	All of the time	Most of the time	Sometimes	Never
Responsibility	45%	43%	12%	0%
Motivation	46%	38%	14%	2%
Self-Confidence	52%	37%	10%	1%
Cooperation	40%	46%	9%	5%

The intervention appears to have had no effect on some of the targeted behaviors. For example, there was a slight decrease in the areas of responsibility and self-confidence. Motivation and cooperation decreased by approximately ten percent. The researcher concludes that this resulted due to the commencement of preadolescence.

The parent post survey revealed an increase in the children's attitude, which focused on coming to school as well as expressing a positive attitude toward themselves. There was a slight increase focusing on students working with others during group activities. The results pertaining to individual work and sharing remained consistent.

The teacher researcher found that there was a slight improvement in student behavior after completing the tally system. There was a slight decrease in group inappropriateness. Also, there was a minor decrease in verbal inappropriateness. However, physical inappropriateness and group complaints increased. At Site C, there were twenty-five incidents of verbal inappropriateness, twenty-four incidents of physical inappropriateness, seven incidents of group inappropriateness, and ten incidents of group complaints over the five day period.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Based on the analysis of the surveys and observation checklists, the students showed some improvement in their social and emotional skills. By using cooperative learning activities, team building, and character education, the targeted groups did show an increased awareness and reaction to social settings in the classroom.

The cooperative group work provided an opportunity for the students to work together and experience situations in which they could practice the social and emotional skills which were targeted. These situations were controlled and well planned in order to encourage the social and emotional growth. In many cases, the researcher was able to use conflicts which arose during these activities as examples of how one can change behavior or make better choices. Although the group work did not always run smoothly, the researchers found that overall, it was a very positive learning experience for their students.

The researchers also found that by using a set theme, which was suggested in the character education manual, the students then had a focus or a goal in mind.

The teacher researchers note that the change within the students was slow, but they felt it was long lasting. The teacher/researchers plan to continue many of the activities throughout the remainder of the year. They felt that their students displayed more growth towards the end of the implementation period and felt it would be extremely worthwhile to continue the program.

The researchers also felt that the age of the targeted group had some impact on their growth. Site A and C were fifth grade students and Site B was comprised of second grade students

The character education strategies benefited students at all three sites. Students learned to cooperate through partner and base group activities. As a result verbal inappropriateness decreased. Therefore, the teaching of social skills has had an impact on students at sites A, B, and C.

When the social skills were taught, students learned how to cooperate with their peers. Thus, by teaching social skills, the emotional skills of the students were enhanced as well. Therefore, students enjoyed working in their base groups regarding the "weekly character trait" , as a result.

In conclusion, these researchers recommend that children need to be taught the various social skills. The instruction of these skills should begin in the early grades and be continued throughout high school. Reinforcement of these themes is key to all of the social skills becoming second nature to the children; something they want to possess rather than something that is expected of them. In turn, these students will be equipped with the life skills which will allow them to be productive and well balanced individuals.

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Appendix A

Parent Notification Letter and Survey

September. 1999

Dear Parents,

I am currently pursuing my master's degree from St. Xavier University. As part of the requirement of the program, I am to complete an action research project. The problem I am researching is the effect of social and emotional development on academic learning and success. I will be collecting data beginning in September and ending in December. The data will be collected in a confidential manner in both formal and informal classroom activities. Some of the activities will include my observations, surveys, and lessons designed to improve and teach social and emotional skills. These activities will not decrease the amount of time spent on academic subjects, but will be used in conjunction with the curriculum.

All students will participate in classroom lessons pertaining to these skills; however, if you do not want your child to be a part of the data collected, you may refuse without penalty to your child.

Please sign and return the consent form to me by Friday, September 3rd. If your are willing to allow your child to participate in the data collection, please sign the consent form below and complete the brief survey attached.

I want to thank you for your participation with my research project. I feel that my research will help to improve your child's social and emotional skills, which in turn will help them achieve academically.

If you have any questions regarding my research or the survey, please do not hesitate to call me at 394-7330.

Sincerely,

Student Name: _____

_____ Yes, my child has permission to participate in the data collection of the research project.

_____ No, please withhold my child from the data collection portion of the research project.

Parent Signature: _____

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Welcome back to a new school year! In an attempt to enhance your child's school experience, please take a moment to fill out the survey below. This survey will remain confidential.

* **PLEASE CIRCLE THE RESPONSE WHICH APPLIES TO YOUR CHILD.**

1. Does your child enjoy coming to school?

   very much somewhat very little not at all

2. When playing with other children can your child share toys, etc.?

   very much somewhat very little not at all

3. Does your child enjoy working with others during group activities in school?

   very much somewhat very little not at all

4. Does your child prefer to work on their own?

   very much somewhat very little not at all

5. Can your child express positive attitudes toward himself/herself?

   very much somewhat very little not at all

6. Does your child demonstrate an awareness of right and wrong?

   very much somewhat very little not at all

7. How many other children are at home?

   _____ boys _____ girls

* **PLEASE COMPLETE THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS:**

1. What goals do you have for your child?

2. What are your child's greatest strengths?

3. What things motivate your child?

4. What are your child's activities and interests outside of school?

Appendix B

Student Survey

STUDENT SURVEY

* IN YOUR OPINION, CIRCLE THE BEST RESPONSE.

RESPONSIBILITY:

1. I do all my school assignments.

   all of the time most of the time sometime never

2. I feel comfortable asking for help when I need it.

   all of the time most of the time sometime never

3. I always check my work.

   all of the time most of the time sometime never

4. I turn in my assignments on time.

   all of the time most of the time sometime never

MOTIVATION:

1. Learning is important.

   all of the time most of the time sometime never

2. I want to learn.

   all of the time most of the time sometime never

3. I always strive to do my best.

   all of the time most of the time sometime never

SELF-CONFIDENCE:

1. I know I can learn.

   all of the time most of the time sometime never

2. I know mistakes are a part of learning.

   all of the time most of the time sometime never

3. I can learn even if the topic is difficult.

   all of the time most of the time sometime never

COOPERATION:

1. I am friendly and helpful with my classmates.

   all of the time most of the time sometime never

2. I listen to my classmates.

   all of the time most of the time sometime never

3. I share and take turns at school.

   all of the time most of the time sometime never

4. I do not use insults.

   all of the time most of the time sometime never

5. I am able to talk about problems with friends.

   all of the time most of the time sometime never

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Appendix C

Teacher Behavioral Survey

Number of Students:_____

Week of:_____ Monday

Teacher Behavioral Survey

Verbal Inappropriateness	Physical Inappropriateness	Group Inapproriatness	Group Complaints